

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT PINS SOCI NP

SUBJECT: STUDENT TROUBLES CONTINUE

REF: KATHMANDU 2613

1. GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO REOPEN CAMPUSES JUNE 15 HAS NOT SUCCEED IN RESOLVING STUDENT PROBLEMS. ONE WEEK AFTER CAMPUS REOPENING OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF STUDENTS CONTINUE TO BOYCOTT CAMPUSES AND EXAMINATIONS. ALTHOUGH STUDENT LEADERS HAVE YET TO CALL ACTION A STRIKE, IN POINT OF FACT CAMPUSES REMAIN VIRTUALLY CLOSED.

2. FOUR STUKENTS WERE REPORTED ARRESTED JUNE 22 AFTER MINOR DEMONSTRATION ON MAIN STREET IN KATHMANDU. ALTHOUGH IT IS NOT CLEAR THAT DEMONSTRATION WAS DIRECTLY TIED TO STUDENT ISSUES, THOSE ARRESTED REPORTEDLY SHOUTED ANTI-GOVERNMENT SLOGANS IN ADDITION TO COMMITTING MINOR PROPERTY DAMAGE.

3. COMMENT: WE UNDERSTAND MANY (PERHAPS MAJORITY) STUDENTS WOULD NOW LIKE TO RESUME CLASSES, SINCE CONTINUED POSTPONEMENT OF EXAMINATIONS MAKES INCREASINGLY LIKELY LOSS OF FULL SEMESTER'S WORK. HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO STUDENTS WE HAVE TALKED TO, STRIKE LEADERS ARE UNWILLING TO GIVE UP DEMAND FOR RELEASE OF STUDENTS WHO ARE STILL UNDER ARREST AS A RESULT OF STRIKE IN MAY. ALTHOUGH STUDENTS AT MEDICAL
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AND ENGINEERING FACULTIES IN KATHMANDU HAVE RETURNED TO

CLASSES AND HAVE TAKEN EXAMINATIONS, ALL OTHER CAMPUSES IN THE VALLEY, AS WELL AS THOSE AT BIRATNAGAR, BHAIRAWA AND TANSEN ARE UNABLE TO FUNCTION. THERE IS AT PRESENT NO INDICATION THAT GOVERNMENT WILL RELEASE ARRESTED STUDENTS WHO ARE CHARGED WITH DAMAGE TO UNIVERSITY PROPERTY AND ASSAULT ON UNIVERSITY OFFICIALS. IT IS EVEN LESS LIKELY THAT IT WILL MEET ANOTHER STUDENT DEMAND FOR THE RESIGNATION OF THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, RADHA PRASAD GHIMIRE. RIJAL GOVERNMENT IS ALREADY UNDER SOME PRESSURE AT THIS SESSION OF THE NATIONAL PANCHAYAT FOR MISHANDLING OF ECONOMIC SITUATION AND IT IS UNLIKELY THAT IT WOULD BE WILLING TO CAPITULATE BEFORE ALL STUDENT DEMANDS, THEREBY FURTHER WEAKENING ITS POSITION AND RAISING POSSIBILITY THAT KING WOULD BE FORCED TO MAKE MAJOR MINISTERIAL CHANGES. ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE IS CONSIDERABLE RESENTMENT ON THE PART OF THE KATHMANDU ELITE THAT CAMPUSES REMAIN CLOSED AS A RESULT OF WHAT IS LONGEST STUDENT STRIKE IN RECENT YEARS. MINISTRY OF EDUCATION OFFICIALS ARE REPORTED TO BE NEGOTIATING WITH STUDENTS JUNE 23 IN A FURTHER EFFORT TO BREAK THE STRIKE, BUT IF PAST PRACTICE IS ANY EXPERIENCE NEGOTIATIONS WILL PROVE DIFFICULT FOR BOTH SIDES AND ARE LIKELY TO DRAG ON. QUANTON

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